



Morning Alert - Tuesday, August 14, 2018

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK led with a report on a typhoon that is expected to make landfall in Kyushu from this evening to tomorrow morning. NTV, Fuji TV, and TV Asahi led with reports on thunderstorms in the Tokyo area on Monday. TBS gave top play to a report on a rape suspect who is at large after escaping from an Osaka police station on Sunday.

Major front-page stories in national papers included an agreement between North and South Korea to hold a summit between President Moon and Chairman Kim in Pyongyang in September, a speech by Prime Minister Abe in which he voiced renewed interest in amending the Constitution, and the vice education minister's plan to resign to take responsibility for the recent arrest of two of his top deputies on graft charges.

SECURITY

Okinawa gubernatorial race to be held on Sept. 30

All papers wrote that the Okinawa prefectural election management commission decided on Monday to hold a special election to pick the late Governor Onaga's successor on Sept. 30, noting that the official campaign period will start on Sept. 13. Saying that Ginowan Mayor Sakima has already decided to surrender his post to seek the governorship, Sankei added that the by-election to select the departing municipal leader's successor will also probably be convened on Sept. 30.

In a related development, all papers wrote that some 4,500 people, including Diet members, local politicians, and business leaders, attended Onaga's funeral yesterday.

Meanwhile, Yomiuri said the Okinawa prefectural government has informally decided to revoke the landfill permit for FRF construction ahead of the start of landfill work by the Defense Ministry scheduled for this Friday, quoting Vice Governor Tomikawa as telling the press on Monday: "There is no question that it will happen prior to the landfill operation."

INTERNATIONAL

Inter-Korean summit to be held in DPRK capital next month

All dailies reported from Seoul on a high-level meeting held yesterday at the DMZ between South and North Korea, during which the two sides agreed that ROK President Moon will visit Pyongyang in September for talks with Kim Jong Un. The papers speculated that attention will be focused on whether the third summit between the two leaders will be able to jumpstart the stalled denuclearization talks between the Trump administration and the Kim regime.

According to Asahi, South Korea had pressed the DPRK for an early summit out of concern that President Moon's pro-dialogue policy might be derailed due to what the paper characterized as stalled U.S.-DPRK denuclearization talks. The paper claimed that the ROK leader is anxious to renew the momentum for peace on the Korean Peninsula in order to recoup his public support, which has been plunging lately on account of a major change in his economic policy. Mainichi wrote that President Moon appears determined to serve as a mediator between the U.S. and the DPRK, explaining that he is hoping to hold a meeting with Kim before the UN General Assembly starts on Sept. 18 and elicit a renewed commitment to denuclearization from Kim so that the two leaders can hold a trilateral summit with President Trump in New York on the margins of the conference.

The papers speculated that the USG is wary that South Korea may be tempted to ease the pressure on the North. Washington is reportedly opposed to Seoul's proposal to exempt several inter-Korean economic cooperation projects from UN sanctions. As for a declaration ending the Korean War that North Korea is reportedly desperate to obtain from the U.S. and South Korea, Asahi reported that U.S. Ambassador to South Korea Harris indicated in a speech in Seoul on Monday that issuing such a declaration would be premature.

Foreign Minister Kono begins four-nation tour of Latin America

Sankei and Mainichi published a Kyodo piece saying that Foreign Minister Kono visited Ecuador on Sunday, becoming the first Japanese foreign minister to visit the nation. He will then travel to Peru, Colombia, and Mexico, where he is aiming to affirm with his counterparts the importance of promoting free trade.

POLITICS

Abe aims to submit proposal on constitutional amendment to Diet this autumn

All papers reported extensively on a speech given by Prime Minister Abe in Yamaguchi Prefecture yesterday in which he expressed his readiness to submit to the planned extraordinary Diet session in the fall his proposal on constitutional revision focusing on a provision making the existence of the SDF explicit. Noting that former LDP Secretary General Ishiba, who has declared his intent to seek the party presidency, is strongly opposed to the draft proposal and that he is reluctant to make constitutional revision a key campaign issue in the LDP race in September, the articles claimed that the premier is hoping to obtain a party-wide consensus for his constitutional amendment proposal by defeating his rival by a wide margin. Asahi and Nikkei speculated that by reiterating his strong commitment to realizing his signature policy, the prime minister is keen to maintain his grip on power after he wins a third term. Asahi quoted a source close to Abe as saying: “Core supporters will desert the premier if he stops being a key proponent of constitutional amendment.”

